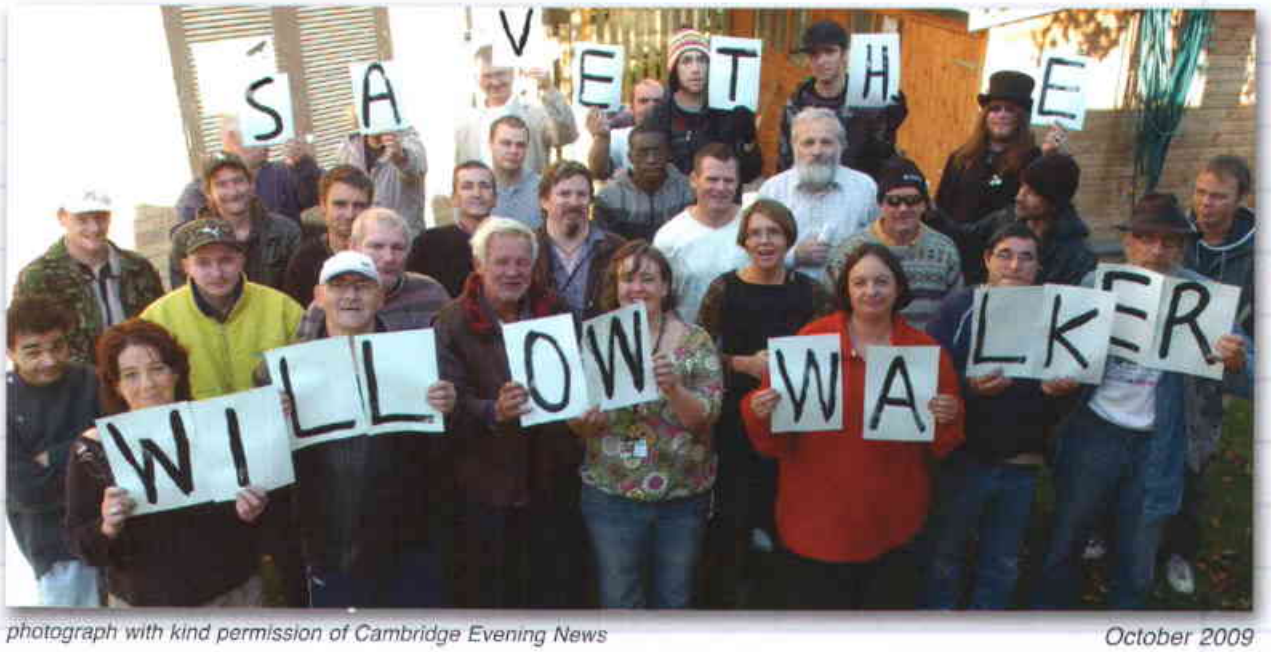
willowalker

Autumn 2009



photograph with kind permission of Cambridge Evening News *October 2009*

This might be the first time you have come across a copy of the Willow Walker magazine and it might be the last. Since 2003 the Willow Walker has published the stories, art and writings of people who share experiences of homelessness; stories about hope and dreams for the future, as well as memories of the past. It has grown into a quarterly full colour magazine; 2000 free copies are distributed across Cambridge.

The Willow Walker is **much more than just a magazine**. There have been concerts, exhibitions and a double music CD release. The Editor also supports the "Homeless Truths" live radio show and Cambridge Link-Up, a homeless-led community group running its own projects and awarding grants to help homeless individuals.

The Willow Walker was started by the English Churches Housing Group but they can no longer afford to run it. Local ECHG managers have made every effort to secure fundraising expertise but have, so far, been unsuccessful. The current Editor's redundancy takes effect from January 14th 2010.

We continue to do everything possible to save the Willow Walker.

Kirsten Lavers
Editor 2006 - 2010

Alexander Masters
Editor 2003 - 2006

February 2006

cover photographs by Suzanne Middlemass

The Willow Walker began as a single photocopied page in 2003, had a circulation of 30 copies, and the residents dubbed it the Willy Wanker. By the second issue it was ready to die from lack of interest. Then I had an idea. Instead of trying to get people to write stories, I'd tape-record them. A cup of tea, a couple of cigarettes, and forty-five minutes of their time: it was all that was needed. I edited down the transcript – my only significant interference – and showed the contributor the result. If he approved, it went in the Walker. If not, the bin. Freed from the fuss over sentence structure and deadlines, the hostel residents let rip. What they told were some of the richest, most vivid folk stories I had ever heard. 'How I lost my left leg' by Wolfie. 'The Best Dustbins of Cambridge', by Kevin Wilde. 'My Invention Could Have Made Me Millions,' by Brian Loughborough, who invented the spirit level that goes round corners, now used by builders all over the world. (Brian could afford only the British patent, so he doesn't get a penny.) Here is James Ulysses Bond battling the conviction that he is stupid:

You see, I'd left school with no qualifications, none, zero, zilch, and I was always told by the powers that be that I was non-compos mentis. So to prove I wasn't as thick as pig effluent and to show that other people can, after leaving school and being over 30, get qualified, I decided to become a priest.

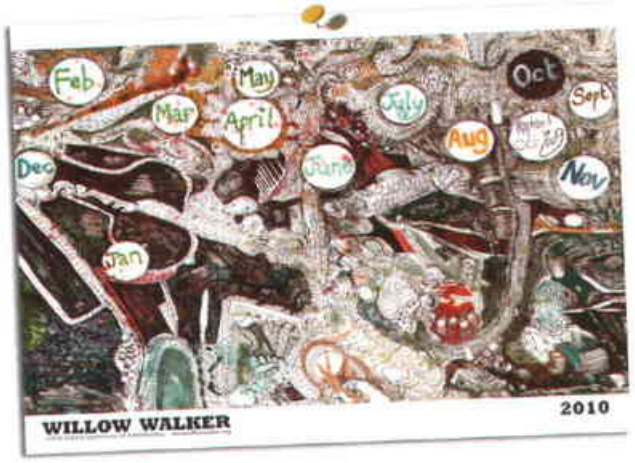
Tom, an alcoholic, described eating langoustine on the Scottish wharves when he was a communications engineer for the rigs on the North Sea.

When you're out there, boy, you know you're out there, because the waves are getting on for 100 feet high. They're smashing against the rig. You can feel the whole frame shaking. And I'm in there, got my little screwdriver, doing my technology bit. You've got to be really careful, because if you connect the wrong thing to the wrong thing. . . . It was exciting work, but I got paid for it, so I could afford the langoustine. Gorgeous things! Gorgeous things. Break the head off, break the tail off, and just eat! Oh, ho, lovely-jubbly!

Look through any national paper on any day, and you'd be hard put to find so much vigour and poignancy in so few lines. The next issue had a circulation of 100. By issue six we were up to 1500, distributing all over the city, and the Cambridge Evening News pinched one of our stories (without acknowledgement). A year later, circulation 2000, Willow Walker was selling pieces on to The Guardian. Reading what these remarkable men and women had to say in the Willow Walker was like picking up a thriller and a comic novel and a horror story and a travelogue. The only contributors I ever had trouble with, were the ones who'd never been homeless: they had nothing to say, and they said it with terrified caution.

True life stories of ordinary people in unpopular places are shocking, difficult, often very funny, frequently outrageous – and we need more of them. The world of the homeless is obscured by gentility and pious pretences. The writers in the Willow Walker bring the real experience of life on the streets to the awareness of readers who know nothing about it except clichés and taxes. We should be learning from the wonderful contributors in this magazine, not just because of their freshness of speech and description, but because the stories they tell are profound and full of human revelation. Homelessness is a world foreign to 99% of the population. The men and women writing here tell us how humans react in such an extreme situation: they are witnesses to the behaviour of us all.

Alexander Masters
Editor, Willow Walker 2003 - 2006



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also on sale at :
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Regular updates can be found at
www.justgiving.com/willowwalker

CHECK OUT THE BLOGS:
http://tinyurl.com/nickwardscenarios
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This celebratory issue of the Willow Walker has been made possible by Cambridge University Press. Thank you to them and everyone who has sent messages of support (see overleaf).

Contact the Editor, Kirsten Lavers
17-19 Willow Walk, Cambridge CB1 1LB
editor@willowwalker.org 07962 685220

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

we think it's a great magazine. it's full of interesting stuff - explanations about chess strategy, poems, drawings, appreciations and obituaries. as someone who hasn't ever been homeless, it is a good reminder that people end up homeless for all sorts of reasons, and shouldn't been seen as automatically part of a homogenous group. long may it continue. **lawrence bradby | norwich**

I am more and more convinced that something to do which gives people self-respect is one of the three great pillars of helping them out of homelessness. The other two being addressing their drug/alc/mental health and other health problems and giving them somewhere to live. The great thing about Willow Walker and Homeless Truths is that people who are isolated from "mainstream" life find they can do creative things which reach a wider public.

Christine Hugh-Jones (Lead GP, Cambridge Access Surgery)

THE WILLOW WALKER SHOULD BE SAVED AS IT IS IMPORTANT TO THE HOMELESS AND ALLOWS PEOPLE To be creative and ALLOWS people to EXPRESS THEMSELES

I know how important it has been for many clients to have been able to contribute to the magazine and to have their voices heard. Cyrenian residents still talk about their own contributions years after they were published. The Willow Walker is a credit to ECHG and the team that have put it together over the years.

Brian Holman, Cambridge Cyrenians

Without an address how ~~else~~ else would homeless people find out News and services that they need? The willow walk is essntial for homeless people enabling them not just to survive but also to dream about tommorow

This is appalling, erroneous and stupid.
Glyn Putwain

Hopefully ECHG will reconsider and apologise to the many of us who have contributed to the Willow Walker over the years, because I can say from the bottom of my heart that writing for the Willow Walker and being a member of Street Voices are about the only things that have given me any hope over the last few years and I know that there are many others who feel the same way. Nick Dominguez

The Willow Walker gives homeless People the Vehicle to have thier Voices, Concerns + dreams expressed whilst giving a huge Sense of achievement.

Without Willow Walker I would not have found my voice again after some traumatic times and I don't think I would have found out that I am a painter as well as a wordsmith. Keep going! ***Nick Ward***

?? Sorry to hear this news, especially as "user involvement/user led services" and social enterprise are so much the current trend. ??
Alastair Murray, Housing Justice

Where else would these voices be heard?

I'm stunned to see the rational for withdrawal of support for the Willow Walker. The magazine, Homeless Truths and Cambridge Link-Up have all offered real opportunities for people to get involved in a way that no one else has quite achieved.

Cathy Hembry, Director Wintercomfort for the homeless

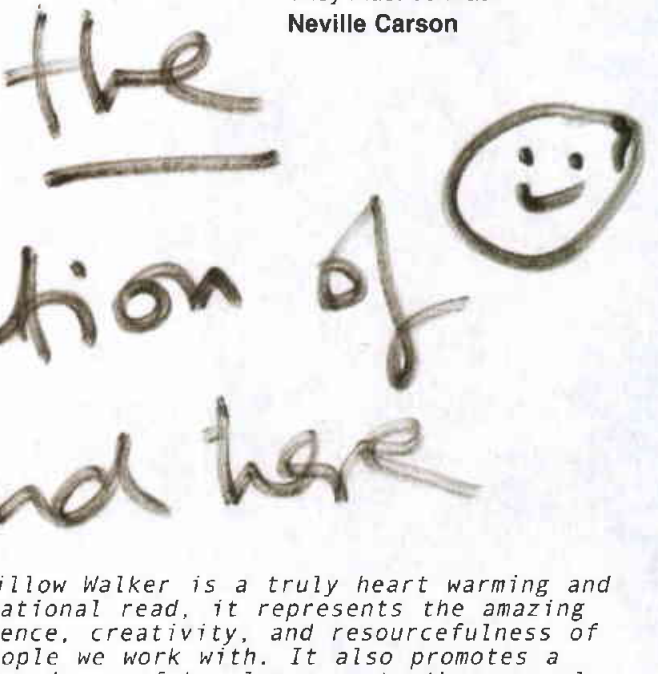
Having worked with homeless people in the past, I know how important it is for people to have a voice and a boost to self-esteem

It is tremendously important that people who have become marginalised and voiceless have a place where they can be heard. It can, for them, be the beginning of a whole new relationship with the world and society. Even if what they have to say at that time seems shocking or unpleasant or unfocussed, they ought to have a place to express it, and the Willow Walker gives them that, and shows to them that they count and that they have talents they can use - artistic, literary, musical. I hope very much that funding can be found to keep the magazine going - it seems a wonderful initiative to me and very much part of helping people who've stopped caring about themselves to give themselves some value. It's difficult to imagine anything much more worthwhile than that.
The Revd Dr Jessica Martin, Trinity College

Having experience homeless, and came into Contact with Cambridge link up, through Wintercomfort, being involved with there services gave me confidence, self belief, and a positive attitude, there services was very beneficial to my progress.

It's well recognised that 'meaningful activity' is vital in helping those from the homeless community move towards stability. Willow Walker has provided just such an opportunity to many of the homeless in Cambridge. Additionally, it's been important in generating support from the wider Cambridge community, developing awareness and understanding around the issues of homelessness. And of course the wider spin-offs from Willow Walker - Homeless Truths, Cambridge Link-Up, the Memorial Garden, for example, have been an inspiration to many.
Jane Heeney, Jimmy's Nightshelter

They must be mad.
Neville Carson



I've featured in the Willow Walker, I made two cartoons on my computer, I had never done anything like that before and was well proud at achieving what I did and being given the opportunity to do it. I made those cartoons on the first computer I had ever owned, I got it from Reboot after ringing them up after seeing their advert in the WW mag.

It was after these two cartoons were published that I went onto learn even more about computers and with the encouragement of Kirsten I went on to design and publish, and still maintain www.cambridgelinkup.org.uk - and subsequently after that I came second in the IT4C Volunteer of the Year Awards :
www.tinyurl.com/scottmccabe

None of this would have happened if it wasn't for the Willow Walker Magazine.
Scott McCabe

The Willow Walker is a truly heart warming and inspirational read, it represents the amazing resilience, creativity, and resourcefulness of the people we work with. It also promotes a positive image of homelessness to the general public, helping them to see the person with a story to tell rather than the stereotypical image they may have. This is an important part of challenging prejudices that many street based homeless have experienced. It would be a very huge loss if the Willow Walker was not able to continue.

Rachel Everitt - Project Manager
CRI Cambridge Street Outreach Team

I think the Willow Walker is a quite remarkable publication and a tribute to all concerned. It is, and is widely perceived to be, symptomatic of a significant 'culture' shift in the way we think about, act and engage in working with homeless/vulnerably housed people.
The demise of the WW would be a terrible shame, and may even have a knock on effect on the morale and, I would assume, rather fragile self-confidence that makes Linkup, Street Voices, Homeless Truths (etc etc) all 'hang together' as part of a whole.

I also need something to read in my GP's surgery, if somebody else doesn't already have it.
Tim Cracknell, Manager, Cambridge GET Group

Cambridge Link-Up is a community group run by homeless people FOR homeless people
anyone who is, or has been, homeless can join & we welcome members who work with homeless people ...

we award small grants... we run projects ... we sell crafts

we will be at Zion Baptist Church, East Rd for Mill Rd Winter Fair December 5th

GET INVOLVED ! WE WANT TO HEAR YOUR IDEAS !

Wednesday 2 December 3pm 222 Victoria Rd everyone welcome

more info > www.cambridgelinkup.org.uk (or call Emma on 07896 717667)

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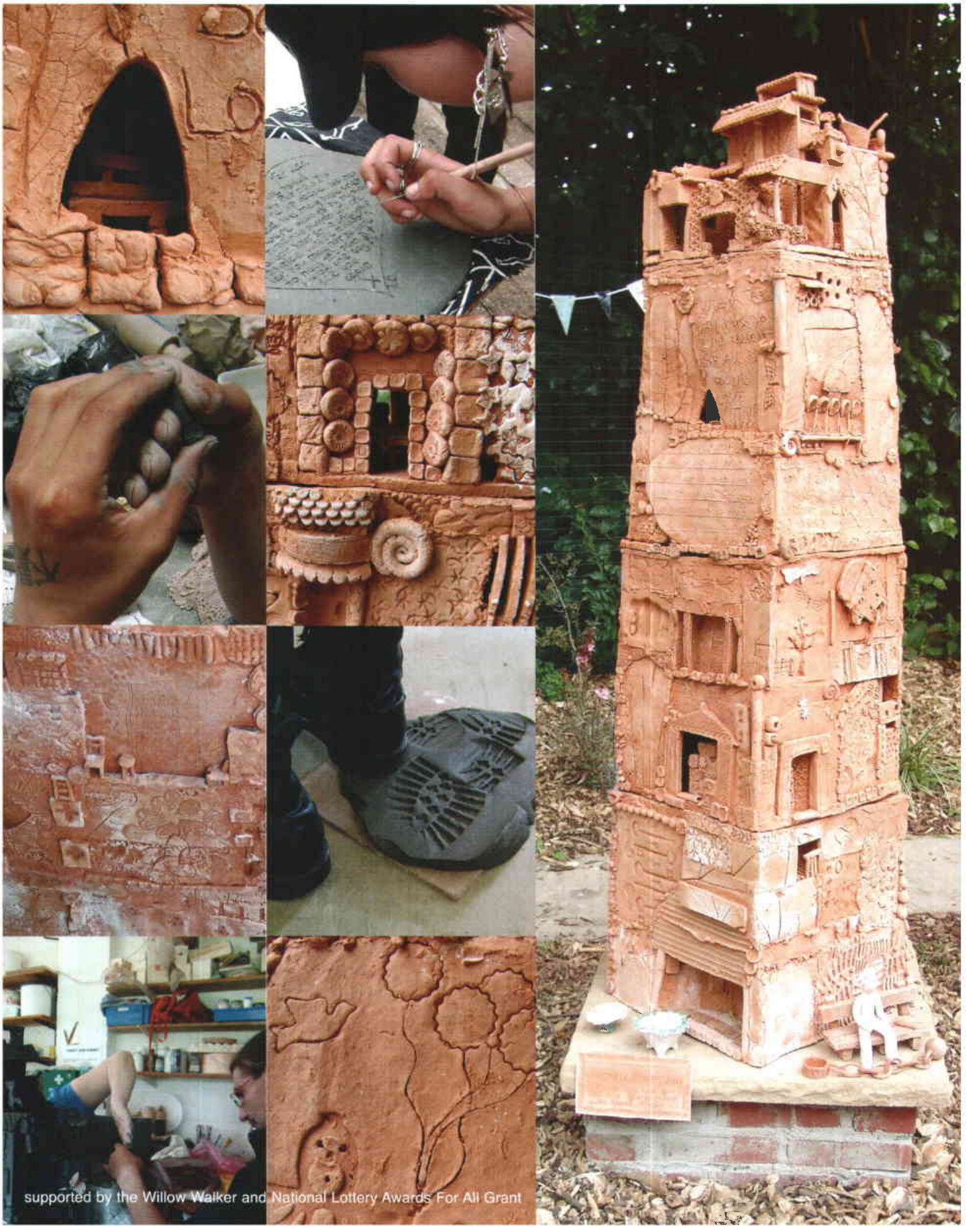
LISTEN TO OUR NEXT LIVE SHOW: DECEMBER 5th

from Mill Rd Winter Fair ... sometime in the afternoon...

if you would like to make radio with Homeless Truths contact Kirsten on 07962 685220

SANCTUARY TOWERS

Created by ceramic artist Emma Fenelon in collaboration with residents of 222 Victoria Rd and visitors to Wintercomfort for the homeless, the two towers are a memorial to all the homeless people who have died in Cambridge. One tower is now installed at the 222 Memorial Garden and the other will be installed at Wintercomfort for the homeless in November.



supported by the Willow Walker and National Lottery Awards For All Grant

Concerts for Homelessness & Leprosy Sunday

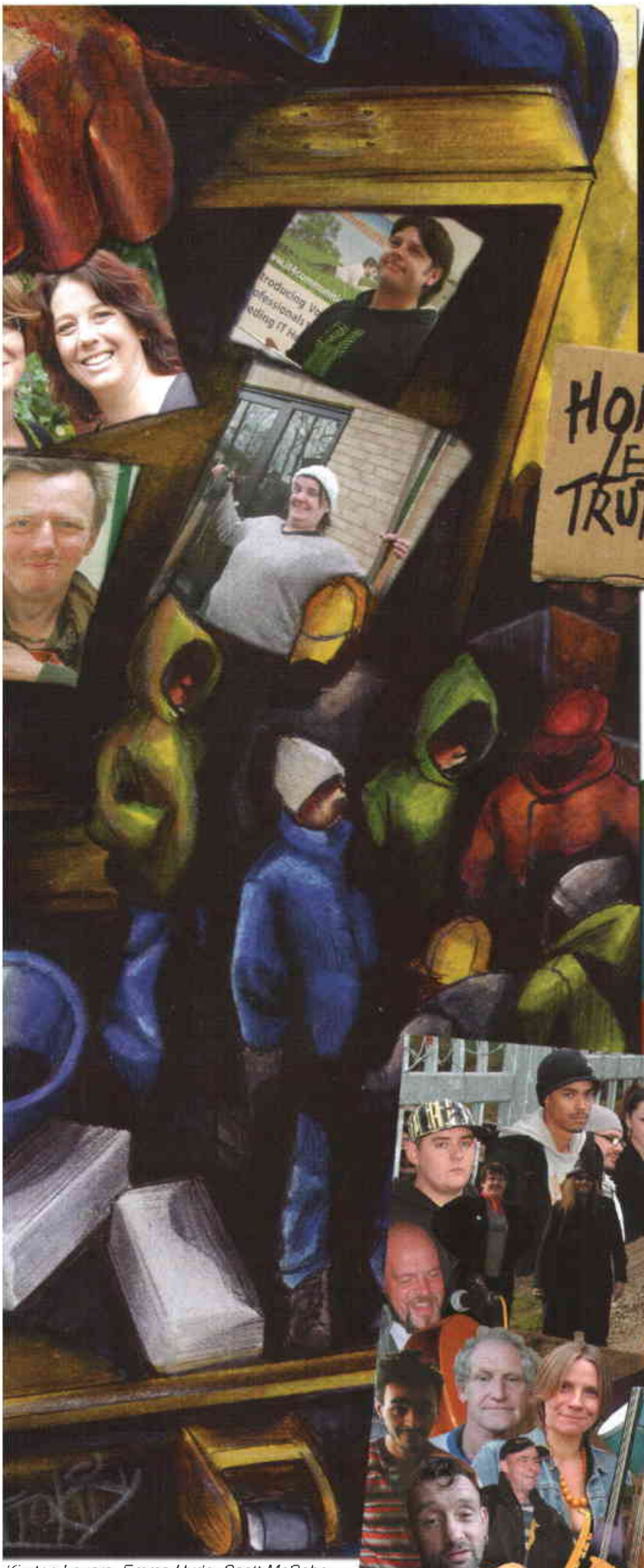
Cambridge Link-Up Memorial Garden

Laila Antoun interviews Tony Benn for Homeless Truths

Jimmmy Sinclair at the Willow Walker Concert, Guild Hall, Cambridge 2006

top row left to right : Nick Dominguez, Manny Beckford
bottom row left to right : Andy Robson, Jar

more than just a r



Kirsten Lavers, Emma Hyde, Scott McCabe
es Bond, Caz Perkins. artwork by ghettokid

Ian Yardley & Simeon Ferguson, Guild Hall Concert 2006

Julian Raphael's installation for Summer Exhibition 2009

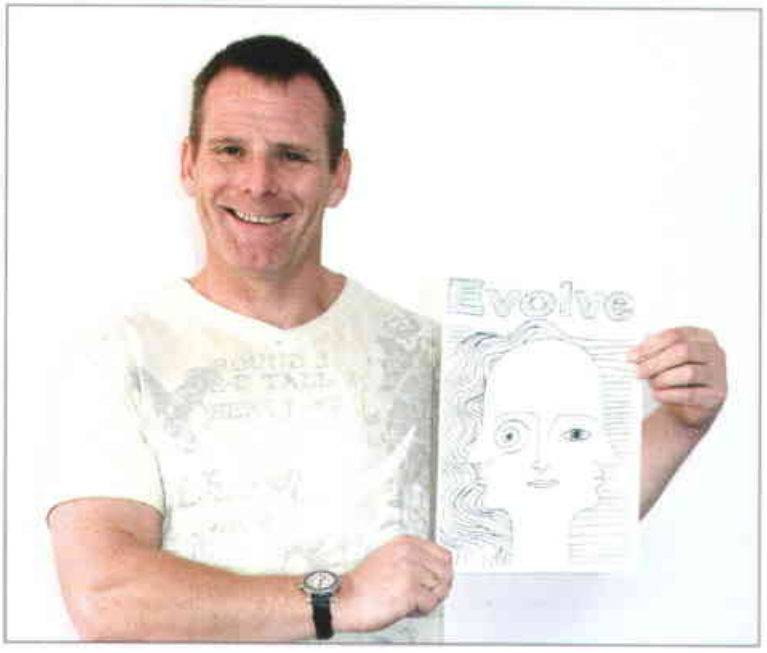
Amon Rah at the Man on the Moon gig

all the musicians, poets and artists featured on the Double CD 'Both Sides of the Tracks'
produced by Cambridge Link-Up and the Willow Walker 2008.
Available for purchase £10 + p&p

nagazine ...

It's like nailing jelly to the wall

Gary Barrett (uncut)* **except for some repetitions of the question "d'ya know what I mean?" :-)*



I was just basically down there with the Big Issue players .... so what happened was I started supplying drugs to keep my own habit going. But I was one of these "cheeky" suppliers ... d'ya know what I mean? I used to just jump over the fence at the 2's and move into the hostel yeah ... give someone a ten bag and move in. I was doing that to all the hostels, Willow Walk, Jimmy's all round everywhere. It got bigger and bigger ... it got that big my habit was all taken for. I ended up with like 6 years 3 months in prison ... and basically I was just planning on ... when you get out .... carry on ... pick up on the same old blag.

I ended up going on the twelve step programme ... It worked for me. It doesn't work for everyone but it worked for me. It took months ... and when I got out ... there was no support there for me. This was like two years ago. I was back in Jimmy's Nightshelter! All addicts and this and that. I did not want to use. I ended up in a hostel at Stonham and I'm back in prison again. Back in a little room, shower, sink. I was sort of scared to speak to addicts because I thought I might get sucked in. So, I just kept on going to NA meetings. I needed to find a way forwards. I didn't know what to do with the rest of my life ... d'ya know what I mean? Thirty eight year old bloke ... " what the fuck do I do now?" I was going to the gym and that. But it all costs money! Everything was slow. So I was going on Relapse Prevention course and that, but I've done all that. So I thought ... rather than take something out ... can I put something back ? d'ya know what I mean? For free. But even to do something FOR FREE is hard. I thought I'll try and get a bit of voluntary work and learn how to do voluntary the right way, support people who are in the same situation as me. It was hard ... I don't know how to speak other people's languages and they didn't really understand where I'm coming from.

As time was moving on and I'd been out for 4 months, 6 months and people started noticing "Gary's not using". This is addicts on the street thinking ... "ay ay fucking hell Gary's not using here." And in this time people were dying. I was stepping over them. People dying. They're on a plaque at the back of the 2's. So whatever, moving forward. And the system! They've got all this "what do you want?" So I was going to places like the Junction ... WHAT DO YOU WANT?" HAVE YOUR SAY and all of that. And they were just coming out all clever! There you go there's the £10 voucher for the phone top-up but basically they weren't doing nothing! I was like left to my own means and ways to get by. But I still wanted to put something back and I couldn't put something back.

I go to Addaction and basically I tell them my story, how I caught Hepatitis C and how I got rid of it. How I went for the treatments and how it hurt and this and that. So Addaction sent me on a course and told me to do a CV. So I've done a CV which I've got here ... d'ya know what I mean? And it's not much ... it's all the skills that I learnt in prison. I feel I can help people if they want what I have to offer. After the Relapse Prevention course I came up with the idea of a magazine. We got together a few of us ex-addicts, some of them are still on meth, some of them are off. We thought we'll put our views together. We need a structure ... so we came up with the idea of doing a magazine about heroin ... everything to do with heroin, where it comes from, how you use it, how you inject, people who die, everything, to do about heroin, withdrawals the lot, from the addict's point of view. We don't know much about editing and stuff like that so we just tried to do it in our way. It still needs tweaking in certain areas. We've put colour and everything in it ... we've included humour and jokes and this and that.

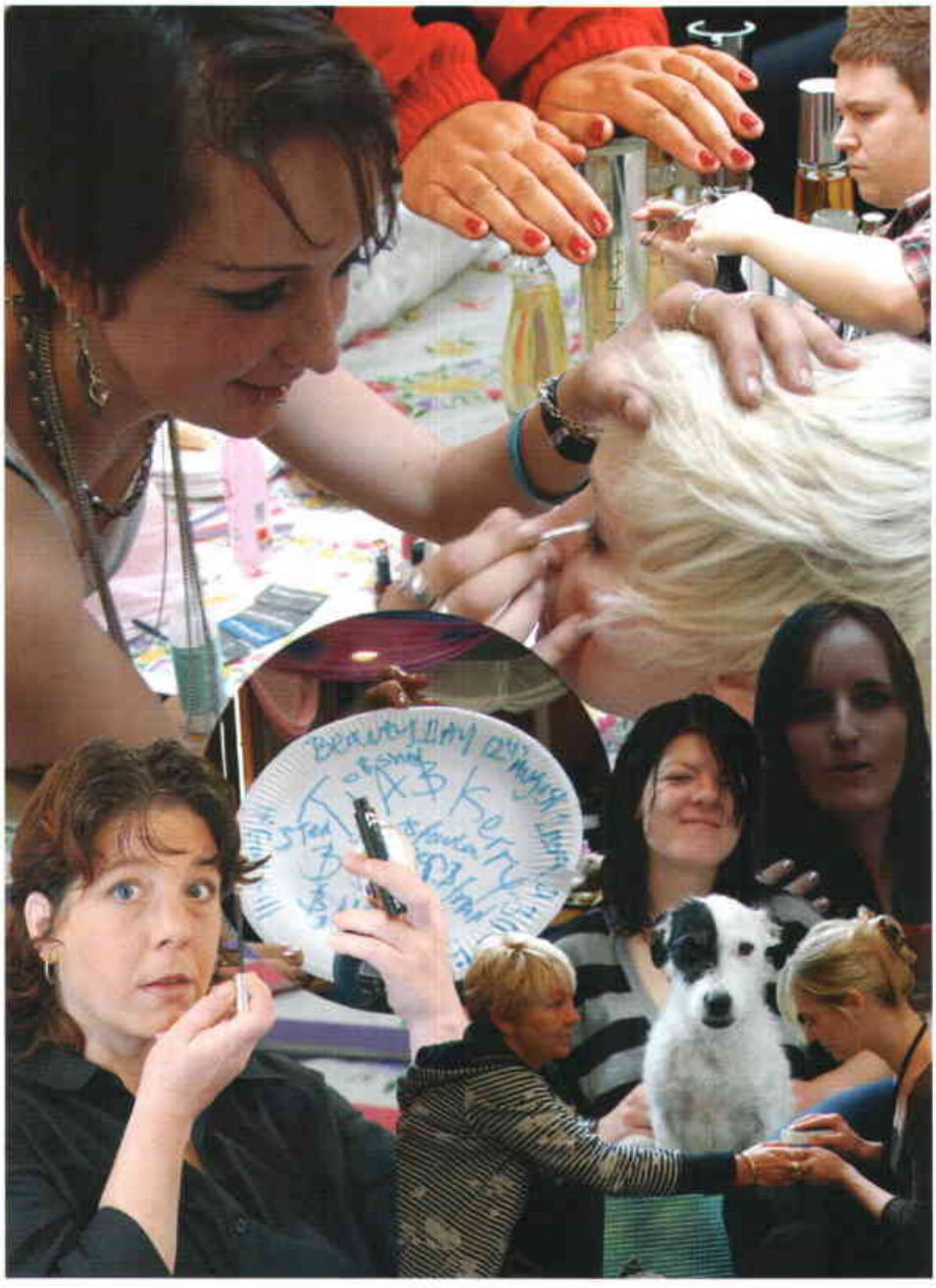
We hope Addaction will produce the magazine for us. But it's getting really hard. I've just seen someone die the other day because they'd just had enough. FUCK IT, y'know? I've tried to put everything I could in the magazine and it just gets cut down. The goal posts get moved, the bar gets raised. "Ay Ay I just want to have my say! and put it in a magazine!" a few addicts have their say put it in and bang it's out there. They wanted us to do all the footwork and we did the work. They did support us in certain bits but it just seems like you might as well get a bowl of jelly and nail it to the wall. We had a magazine meeting this morning and I was the only one who turned up because the others have floated off because it's just taken too long. I didn't want it to be all by me. I want other people to get involved. But we need to get the magazine out there and people asking about it and then turning up and then BOOM ... that's the way you go ... that's the way .. everyone supporting each other ... little clips and bits and radio station and everything gets put together ... but they can't see that, they want a tick in a box and and if they can't see a quick solution, quick results ... well they don't want it. Just chop it down. It's mad.

I could get selfish, I can look after myself, I can get a little job and go to NA and this and that. I've found my little way. I don't want to preach it. I want to talk with an addict so he can understand. I've got something to talk about that's not the next fix or how many jail sentences they've done or where they're going shoplifting. They may want to come off the gear but don't know how ... in a positive and assertive way to move forward ... slowly, that's the hardest thing to slow down a bit ... a little look and listen ... that's want we at EVOLVE want to offer ...

contact Gary c/o Willow Walker Editor.
email editor@wilowwalker.org
or call 07962 685220

Many Willow Walker articles are direct transcripts from recorded interviews with the Editor. The opinions expressed in this article are Gary Barrett's.

Women's Day at 222



We wanted to hold a day for women residents that was really positive. There was the opportunity to have a haircut, manicure and makeover. Hannah helped apply make-up, which we really encouraged, as she is so good at applying her own make-up. It was something Hannah had not done before, she really seemed to enjoy doing it. A big thank you goes to local hairdresser Michael Lee for cutting and styling the residents' hair. He spent time over each resident, making sure that they got the haircut they wanted.

In the afternoon, the women had a chance to learn how to self massage and try some Tai Chi moves to aid well-being and relaxation. The day was very successful; everyone enjoyed it. It was a chance to have some fun, feel good, and try something different. We would very much like to hold another Women's Day in the future and we challenge the men to organize themselves a Men's Day !!!

Fran Hall and Paula Diment
Support Workers at Willow Walk and 222

Thanks also to:
Boots The Chemist and The Perfume Shop for their generous donations
Diana Minns for cakes and biscuits for the day
Andy Smith for his photographs
Kimberley Moseley for her manicures
Graham Haynes for the music and for providing lunch
Paula's friend for her massage and Tai Chi lessons

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THE BIG ISSUE

ARJUNA WHOLEFOODS

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What's new at Wintercomfort for the homeless ?

Lots has changed at Wintercomfort - what we offer, the building we are in ... But a warm and friendly welcome is still an essential part of who we are. If there is something you want to change about your life, big or small, come and see how we can help.

check out www.wintercomfort.org.uk for our what's on page and send us details of your activities

Comfort Zone

8.30am - 10.00am Mon to Fri

Anyone with any experience of homelessness is welcome to the Comfort Zone.

We offer respite from the streets and all the services that have long been associated with Wintercomfort like breakfast & refreshments, shower & bathing facilities, access to laundry & clothing stores and free internet access.

Support with housing & access to health care services is delivered by Cambridge Street Outreach Team (CRI), Centre 33, Addaction, Cyrenians Mental Health Team and St Johns Ambulance.

Free internet access 8.30 - 3.30 daily

WinterNights

8.30pm - 8.00am November - March when the temperature is predicted to be below 0 degrees for three nights or more in a row.

An emergency overnight service for people who would otherwise be forced to sleep rough in below zero temperatures.

Centre Forward

10.00am - 3.30 Mon-Friday

A wide-ranging programme of activities, information, advice and guidance to support personal development in social, leisure, occupational, volunteering, educational, training and employment sectors, focusing on people's skills and aspirations. If there is nothing on offer at Wintercomfort that gets you motivated we can help you find the opportunities that excite you in the wider community.

If you've moved on and don't fancy coming back give us a call and we will come to you.

Food4Food

Delivers a comprehensive training program in food & nutrition, budget management/best value, stock control, food hygiene, catering and hospitality to people with experience of homelessness.

WinterWillow

We are developing a social enterprise based on willow craft which will offer opportunities for occupation, training and employment across a range of disciplines including conservation, design, craft sales, marketing, distribution and much more.

We are already producing garden sculptures and plan to craft willow eco coffins. Our training program begins in November 2009.

We expect to be able to offer four service users full time employment in the weaving of willow eco coffins by November 2011. Please contact Roger Fowle if you are interested in this ancient and traditional craft.

NATURAL BORN TALENT

Alex Roberts

I've just come back from watching young Alex Roberts (21) at the Cambridge Golf Driving Range. His potential was spotted by a worker at 222 Victoria Rd and Cambridge Link-Up gave him a grant for two lessons with the golf pro there, Mike Herbert, to check him out.

Mike was in his words "gobsmacked" by Alex's natural ability and raw talent. He is genuinely VERY, VERY excited by this young man's potential , his willingness to learn and his focus during the two lessons. He said "he's like a sponge, he just absorbs it all and immediately puts it into action ... he's already playing shots with the finesse of a professional."

Alex has never played on a proper golf course. He inherited a set of clubs from his Grandad who died before he kept his promise to teach him to play. Alex is unemployed and living at homeless hostel 222 Victoria Rd. His keyworkers have been tearing their hair out trying to get him motivated, but that's all changed now.

Want to support Alex Roberts' talent ?
please contact : editor@willowwalker.org 07962 685220

Willow Walker and Cambridge Link-Up are supporting Alex and wish him well for his first round at the new Malton Golf Course in early November.

Dying for a home

Dr Christine Hugh-Jones

You may have seen on TV a report on the "The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Homelessness" (JSNAH) study, just released by the Cambridgeshire Public Health Department.

The study used anonymous statistics from Cambridge Access Surgery. They found that the average age at death was 44 years old. Then they looked at the general Cambridgeshire population and found that life expectancy – that is the age a person can expect to live - was double this. Then, like chalk and cheese, the two were wrongly compared by the press.

"Life expectancy of homeless people in Cambridge is half that of the rest of the population of Cambridgeshire." **FALSE**

The average age of Access Surgery patients who have died is shockingly young. This is because our patients are relatively young. They are mainly men (1 in six are women) from young adulthood to young middle age. Many are at the very lowest point in their lives.

Sadly, some homeless people have wrongly understood the press coverage to mean that they will probably only live until they are 44. Look at it a better way, fewer than 10 of our several hundred patients die each year, so each registered patient has only a 2% to 3% chance of dying in the next year. This is still much too high but it does not mean that if you are forty you have only four years to live.

Homeless people are much more likely to die young than people who are not homeless. **TRUE**

So, why am I complaining when the media report it with a bit of spin to drive it home? First, because the media has a responsibility to help the public understand the truth about statistics in the news and not to peddle bad science.

Second, because they did not talk about the JSNAH report itself. The only thing which can make a difference to homeless deaths is looking carefully at the causes of death and how to prevent the serious illnesses and other problems homeless people have.

The JSNAH did give plenty of information about these things. The whole point was to look at what services for homeless people we already have in Cambridgeshire and how we could do better. The report says that the services should fit what homeless people need. It insists that top managers should stop concentrating on what fits nicely with their own plans. Instead, they should find out what homeless people themselves, and those who work with them, say would work.

The facts are that of Cambridge Access Surgery patients, 1/2 have an alcohol problem, 2/3 have a drug problem (usually heroin and crack), 1/2 have a mental health problem. Many have two or all three. These three problems destroy people's lives so they cannot see any future and are extra prone to chaotic and risky behaviour. They also destroy physical health through liver failure, hepatitis C, infections and accidents. Taken together, drugs, alcohol and poor mental health play a major part in nearly all deaths among the homeless.

So what can we do? Recognise the obvious and stop dividing up health services into smaller and smaller specialities! We must look for ways to bring health services for drugs, alcohol and mental health together. Homeless people need someone to put the whole picture together, to eliminate running from one service to another.

We must make a health service which gives homeless people the best chance of getting well and having better, happier lives. The JSNAH was a big step in the right direction.

What a pity no-one except the Willow Walker has bothered to report this.

REMEMBERED FRIENDS

TRACEY TOWNSEND

Christmas dinner, 2008. This was a special one because it was just Tracey and me. We had a great laugh preparing the meal. I was trying to keep her out of the kitchen while she insisted she could "help".

She would send me down to the shops while she would graft with the hoover. She would also insist that she would wash the socks etc, even though they probably did not need washing yet.

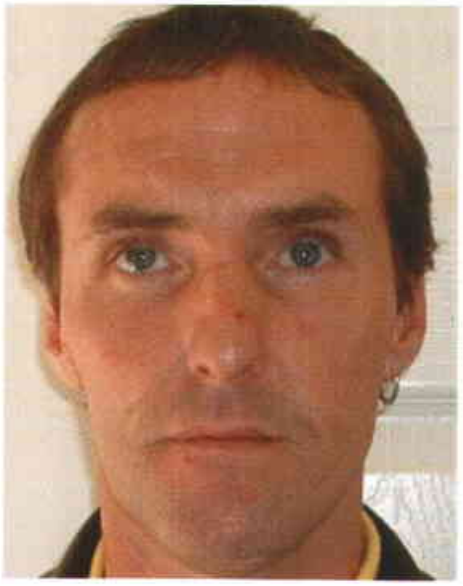
Tracey was full of contradictions but I loved her no matter what she said or did. Her initials were T.N.T and she certainly lived up to them!

I may not have been with her long (16 months) but I will always have a place in my heart and head that has her name and memory in it.

I will never forget Tracey. She was an important part of my life while she was around. These are memories of laughter, anger and tears. She was my little hero who never gave up. Tracey was resilient and brave through tough times. I will always remember her.

Lots of Love Always
Jon Abrahams

The Cambridge Link-Up Book of Remembrance is based at Wintercomfort for the homeless at Overstream House on Victoria Rd



TOMMY McLAFFERTY

I first met Tommy when he came along to my Missing Links* internet group at 222 (homeless hostel). He came to support his good friend, Paul Galley and was adamant that he wouldn't be able to learn how to use computers himself. Tommy told me a little about his life in professional football, his passion for Celtic and his experiences as an advisor during the filming of Danny Boyle's film 'Trainspotting'. We even talked about doing an article together, Tommy was keen to get back involved with football coaching with young people.

Earlier this year, Tommy started coming to the group on his own. By this time he had moved into his own flat and was starting to make the first tentative steps towards tackling his problems with alcohol. Tommy wanted to know if he could use the internet to find his daughter, Kayleigh Ann, whom he had not seen since she was five, 14 years ago. Week after week Tommy walked from Chesterton to 222 and gradually got to grips with using a mouse and keyboard, signing up for email and doing internet searches.

Tommy was anxious about whether he was doing the right thing and was understandably nervous about making contact after such a long absence. We followed many Google dead ends and were almost at the stage of giving up when he suggested putting "gorbals" in the search command along with his daughter's name. This immediately came up with a page on the Gorbals Live online community website. It was a massive page and we kept scrolling down and down. Some entries included people's emails, others didn't. We knew Kayleigh's name was there somewhere ... I spotted it before Tommy did ... in fact it was the tears in my eyes that made him realise we'd found her.

Hi I'm looking for my dads family the mclaffertys there is a margaret, david and thomas. David and margaret should be in ther late 50's by now and my dad thomas should be around 46 cheers.Submitted by: kayleigh ann mclafferty

And her email was there too! We were dancing and crying and laughing. This was just the most perfect message to find ... Kayleigh Ann was looking for him! Tommy was shaking as he wrote his first email to her.

Just a few months later Tommy went up to Scotland to meet Kayleigh and her mum Carol again. He was helped by Cambridge Link-Up who paid for his coach travel. He was bouncing on air when he got back. "It was brilliant!" he kept saying and so proud of his daughter studying at college and working and even of her purple hair!

My heart goes out to Tommy's family and to his friends, especially Paul Galley. Tommy was a gentle man, a very good friend and an extremely proud father.

Kirsten Lavers
Editor, Willow Walker

** The Missing Links project has lost its funding from Church Housing Trust and my internet sessions are no longer on offer. Internet access is available at Wintercomfort for the homeless.*

STEVEN ODDY

Steve will be much missed by **Cathy Hembry** for his permanent attempts to confuse and confound, often accompanied by a winning smile that meant my frustration was rarely lasting!

SUESIE JACKSON

The first time I met Suesie*, I thought wow, rock chick or what? She had on skin tight jeans, and very high thigh-length boots. She looked great and she knew it!. We were introduced through mutual friends, and in time honored tradition of meeting someone new at the 2's we cracked open a bottle or three to break the ice.

As the evening progressed I found out so much about Suesie, not only was she intelligent and funny she had lots of fascinating stories to tell, and even when the booze ran out we sat up until the early hours chatting away.

Suesie was such an easy person to talk to, but if you were in the wrong she certainly wouldn't sugar coat the pill to your advantage. That was Suesie as a friend, fiercely protective of you but never shy in pointing out there are always two sides to every story.

Whenever one of us had a problem, (usually about men) we'd stock up on the necessary ingredients for a girly slumber party, and make the world good again.

Thank you Suesie for your honesty. patience, sense of humor and kindness.

May your slumber parties never end.

Never above you, never below you, always by your side.

XXX
Emma Hyde

** Editor's note: Suesie was VERY particular about spelling her name in this unusual way.*

personal tributes are welcomed at the Cambridge Link-Up Online Memorial Garden

www.tinyurl.com/onlinememorialgarden